Braille Basics

Braille is a system that enables blind and visually impaired people to read and write through touch. It was devised by Louis Braille in 1821 and consists of raised dots arranged in "cells." A cell is made up of six dots that fit under the fingertips, arranged in two columns of three dots each. Each cell represents a letter, a word, a combination of letters, a numeral or a punctuation mark.

The Braille Cell

1 ● ● 4
2 ● ● 5
3 ● ● 6

The first ten letters of the alphabet are formed using the top four dots (1, 2, 4, 5). Adding a dot 3 makes the next ten letters, and adding a dot 6 to that makes the last six letters (except "w" because it was not used very much in the French language at the time that Louis Braille devised this system). Punctuation is represented by its own unique set of dots, most often found in the lower part of the cell. In addition to the alphabet, the Braille Code includes many contractions, which are braille cells that can stand for a combination of letters or entire words. Literary braille numbers are formed by placing the braille number sign ⠼ (dots 3, 4, 5, and 6) before the braille letters "a" (⠼⠁). through "j" (⠼⠚). There is also a code used for math and science notations called Nemeth.

The Braille Alphabet

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
u	v	w	x	y	z				

Common Punctuation Marks

,	;	:	.	!	()	? "	*	"	'	-

The Braille Numbers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0